



GET  
FULLY  
WITH IT

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Vintage appeal:  
Vitalie and Pierre-  
Emmanuel Taittinger  
in Reims and (op-  
posite) Champagne  
bottles rest in the  
family estate's cave.

**VITALIE TAITTINGER SERVES UP THE BEST OF HER HOMETOWN,  
CHAMPAGNE'S CAPITAL, REIMS.**

LUC VALIGNY



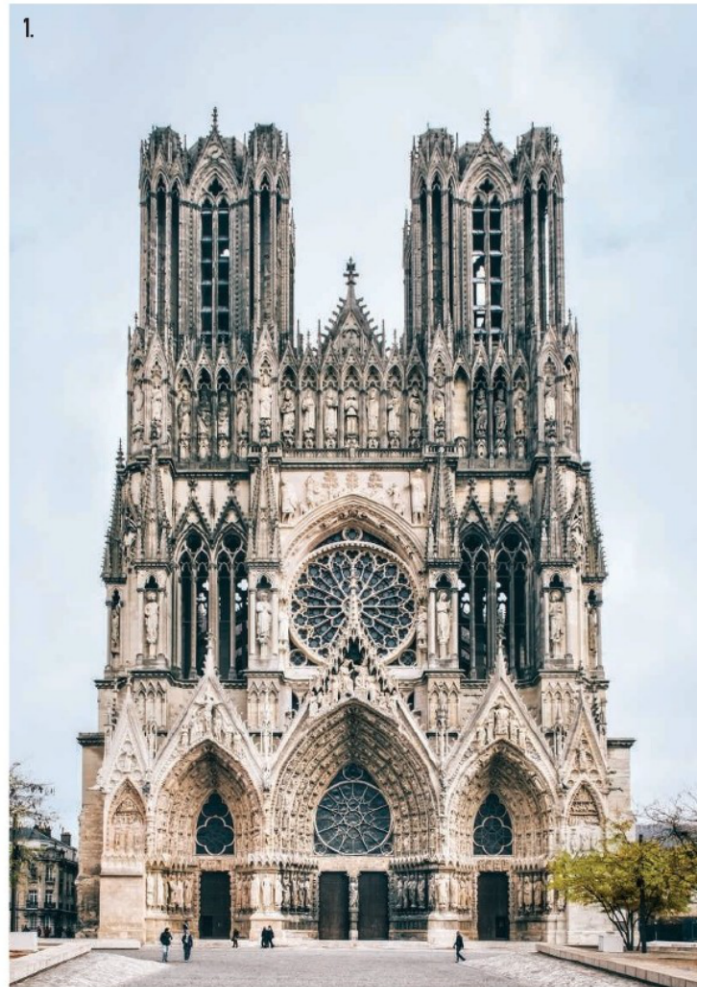
# LET'S

## GET THIS OUT OF THE WAY:

The French pronunciation of Reims isn't pretty. Where Anglophones might say *reemz* and are generally understood by locals, the normally mellifluous Francophones pronounce the word something like *ranse*, with a heavy dose of nasal undertone. Luckily, it's only the name that's hard to swallow.

An easy 45-minute train ride northeast from Paris, Reims is the buzzy epicenter of sparkling wine. Champagne has been made here since the late 1600s, and roughly 300 million bottles per year are produced from its surrounding vineyards today. Home to esteemed names such as Veuve Clicquot, Pommery, Louis Roederer, Ruinart, and Taittinger, the Gallo-Roman city bubbles over with enough Champagne and French history to slake a nearly unquenchable thirst for both.

Few people have helped stamp Reims on the tourist map as has the Taittinger family: The late Jean Taittinger, the family scion and mayor of the city for 18 years (1959-77), campaigned successfully for the A4 Paris-to-Strasbourg highway to pass nearby, ensuring that all roads – or at least the important ones – lead to Reims. But it's the current generation who are determined to raise







the profile of bubbly and of its birthplace with up-and-coming tastemakers worldwide.

In 2005, the Taittingers sold their luxury conglomerate, which included two prestigious Paris hotels as well as their Champagne holdings, to U.S. firm Starwood Capital. A year later, Jean's son and current CEO Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger, 63, bought back the business, which he now runs with his son, Clovis, and daughter Vitalie. As the company's marketing and artistic director, Vitalie represents the brand in France and abroad at notable events such as Paris' Le Salon de la Revue du Vin de France, an annual gathering of the world's greatest winemakers, and the Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles – where a Champagne Taittinger toast has opened the ceremony for the past 16 years.

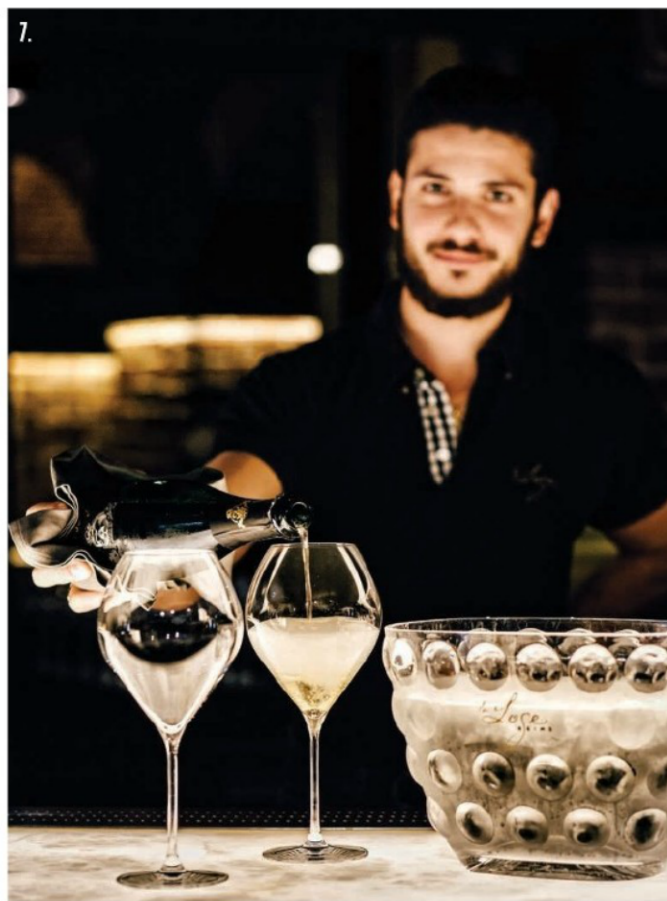
Despite its profile, Pierre-Emmanuel strives to keep Taittinger affordable and welcoming. "It's not for billionaires," he says. "You should drink it because you like it, with a good meal, and with people you like."

The same could be said for enjoying Reims. "More and more people from Paris and other places are coming to live and work in Reims, opening restaurants and little shops," says Vitalie, 37. "The city is alive and fresh." Whether you're passing through for a day or drinking more deeply of Champagne's capital, raise a flute to her favorite finds in the city.

**CROWNING GLORY  
NOTRE-DAME DE REIMS  
AND PALAIS DU TAU**

The thirteenth-century Gothic cathedral is the hallowed spot where 29 French kings

1. Notre-Dame de Reims. 2. Vineyard views from Hautvillers, home of Dom Pérignon. 3. Stock up on pink biscuits at Maison Fossier's store. 4. Vitalie Taittinger on the Screen Actors Guild Awards' red carpet in L.A. 5. Downtown's Venetian carousel. 6. Artist haven, the Café du Palais. 7. Vitalie's pick for a stylish night out, La Loge.







2.



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1. Tandem's carefree fashion.
2. Home decor shop Les Fées de Style.
3. Special-edition artist-designed Taittinger bottles dating to 1978 at Café du Palais.
4. A street scene on cours Jean-Baptiste Langlet.
5. Vitalie's go-to boutique, Intemporel.



were crowned, including King Charles VII (accompanied by Joan of Arc in 1429) and the country's last Bourbon monarch, Charles X, in 1825. "It was very important to my grandfather for Reims to have a future linked to Paris," Vitalie says. "As the mayor he celebrated the 1962 German-French reconciliation in the cathedral with Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle." He was also among those who recruited Marc Chagall – a frequent visitor to Reims – to create the axial chapel's stained-glass windows. *Place du Cardinal Luçon.*

#### POP! STAR CHAMPAGNE TAITTINGER

Myriad Champagne houses imbue Reims visits with an effervescent Zen, but perhaps none more so than **Champagne Taittinger**, built on the ruins of the thirteenth-century Saint-Nicaise Abbey. It's the last of the Grandes Marques Champagne houses owned and run by members of the founding family. Stop in and tour the *crayères*, chalk caves filled with aging bottles of prized cuvées – which use a higher proportion of chardonnay grapes than other Champagnes for a lighter, easy-drinking feel – and scan the walls for carvings made by sheltering Allied soldiers and civilians. The tasting room is open from mid-March through late November. *9 place Saint-Nicaise; taittinger.com.*

#### PINK PICK ROSE BISCUITS OF REIMS

As well known in Reims as the cathedral at which they were first presented during Louis XVI's coronation in 1775, **Maison Fossier's biscuits roses** (pink biscuits), ladyfinger-like cookies typically dunked in coffee, tea, and, yes, Champagne, make a sweet souvenir. "They have a long, beautiful history in Reims," Vitalie says. "I've seen those biscuits in my kitchen since I was a child." Pick up a tin at the shop near the cathedral (*25 cours Jean-Baptiste Langlet*) or watch them made fresh at the factory (*20 rue Maurice PrévotEAU*).

#### STYLE STOCK-UP HEAD-TURNING TASTE

At **Les Fées de Style**, French- and European-designed home decor items and accessories such as place mats, pillows, tea-cups, and candleholders dress up any address. "It's a nice shop with little things to make your home sweet," says Vitalie. "My daughter loves to bring me there!" *81 rue Chanzy; lesfeesdestyle.com.*

For fashion-savvy Rémoise there's no rival to **Intemporel** (*Galerie Condorcet*), an Ali Baba-esque cave of high-end clothing, shoes, and accessories, managed by Agnes Peucheret since 1978. "She knows by heart the history of fashion and style, and has many masterpieces, sometimes at half price," says Vitalie. Around the corner is the more casual **Tandem** (*19 rue Condorcet*), with clothing Vitalie describes as more youthful and hippie-chic oriented.

#### SANTÉ! WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK WELL

"You can feel the family spirit at **Café du Palais**," says Vitalie. The Vogts love art and have run the café for four generations, and their collection of drawings and paintings and the stained-glass ceiling tell their family story through the artists who have met – and still meet – at their historic café. *14 place Myron Herrick; cafedupalais.fr.*

**Le Parc at Les Crayères** has served as the gastronomic institution in Reims for more than two decades. "Young chef Philippe Mille's delicious dishes fall between tradition and modernity," Vitalie says. "Plus, they serve fabulous wines, thanks to their smart sommelier, Philippe Jamesse." *64 boulevard Henry Vasinier.*

A newcomer in town, **Racine** is the French/Japanese-fusion gem of Kazuyuki Tanaka, formerly the sous chef at Le Parc. "It has only ten tables, and his menu changes all the time," says Vitalie. "The dishes are like art." *8 rue Colbert; racine.re.*

Located in the city's historic center, **Le Wine Bar** (*16 place du Forum; winebar-reims.com*) is Vitalie's "perfect place for an after-work drink." For a sophisticated night out with friends, she heads to **La Loge** (*35 rue Buirette; laloge-reims.com*), which offers a wide variety of Champagnes by the bottle.





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## UNCORKING REIMS

Live the life of Champagne dreams.

**STAY** An elegant nod to nineteenth-century manor houses, the 20-room **Château les Crayères** brims with fine fabrics, antiques, and *oeuvres d'art* and is home to chef Philippe Mille's gleaming two-Michelin-starred restaurant, Le Parc. For more casual but no less impressive dining, try its modern brasserie, which faces the garden and pours a wide selection of local bubbly. *Doubles from \$420, including breakfast daily and a cellar tour and tasting at Champagne Pommery.*

**GO** Explore Paris, Provence, the Côte d'Azur, and more on **Travco's** 12-day tour of France. The

trip includes two days in Reims, with a tasting at Champagne Pommery, a private cocktail reception and Champagne-paired dinner at Ruinart, and accommodations at Château les Crayères. *Departure: September 9, 2017; from \$15,990.*

**European Connection's** privately chauffeured day trips to Reims from Paris visit sites such as the 800-year-old cathedral and the Basilica of Saint Remi before a cellar tour and tasting at Taittinger. Travelers then head to Épernay for a tasting at Moët & Chandon and follow the Route du Champagne past vineyards

for a sampling at the only house to use 100 percent *grand cru* grapes, Maily. *Departures: Any day through 2017; from \$1,215 for two people.*

**Artisans of Leisure's** customizable eight-day journey through France can kick off with an epicurean tour in Paris before setting out to discover rural Burgundy and Champagne with a private driver and guide in each location. A walking tour of Reims highlights its art deco and UNESCO jewels, while a second day is filled with a tasting tour of cellars lining the Route du Champagne. *Departures: Any day through 2017; from \$13,950. VI.*



**1. Palais du Tau's backyard garden. 2. A guest room at Château les Crayères, and 3. the beef fillet with foie gras at its restaurant, Le Parc.**